

The Socialist Fulcrum

THE Socialist Fulcrum, originally Fulcrum, was first published in 1968 as the journal of the Victoria Local of the SPC. In 1975, it became the official English-language journal of the Socialist Party of Canada. It never achieved the success or the circulation of either the Western Socialist or Socialisme Mondial.

It was generally agreed that the standard of writing in the Fulcrum was high, and most of the articles interesting. Contributors as far afield as Peter Furey, in New Zealand, wrote for the journal, as did Sid Catt in Toronto. But a letter from Sid and Marie Catt, and Ray Rawlings, in Toronto dated July 22, 1982, which they sent to the Executive Committee of the SPC, and by Steve Coleman on behalf of the Executive Committee of the SPGB in September of the same year, to the Socialist Party of Canada and other socialist parties, details the problems among others of the Socialist Fulcrum.

The Toronto members discovered that, not only was the Fulcrum "a spasmodic publication", but that "more Fulcrums are sold in England than in Canada, when the reverse should be the case". They also mention the "exorbitant cost of producing the Fulcrum". Coleman notes that the SPC only prints between 350 and 500 copies of the Socialist Fulcrum per issue, at a cost of approximately 450 dollars. 500 copies of the 50th anniversary issue were printed, but this was untypical. Of the 350 copies of the previous issue, fewer than 300 were distributed. And of these, virtually no individual copies were actually sold in Canada. Coleman lists the distribution as follows:

Libraries (sent free):	75 copies;
Subscribers (in Canada):	20 "
Bookshop (in Vancouver):	1 "
Winnipeg members:	5 "
Toronto members:	5 "
Victoria members:	5 "
SPNZ:	5 "
SPGB:	90 "
WSP(US):	5 "

Seven copies were sent to individuals in Britain, and a few extra copies were occasionally sent elsewhere. But that was all. For example, in December, 1981, the SPC paid for an advertisement of the Fulcrum in the Canadian Dimension. Not a single enquiry came in for a copy of the Fulcrum from this advertisement. No copies were sold in Vancouver.

Coleman reports that

"The Socialist Fulcrum is produced mainly by two members and a member's wife. One member sets up or strips the pages, gathers or draws the graphic material or modifies it, writes some articles, does some of the proof reading and arranges the reproduction. Another member, with his family's aid, collates the pages, staples them, addresses and mails them. This member's wife typesets the journal for 150 dollars per issue, about half the cost of having it typeset outside, meaning that he and his wife are subsidising the Fulcrum to the extent of 150 dollars per issue. They own a typesetting machine (IBM Compsetter)."

Generally, the Socialist Fulcrum was published four times a year; but not always. Steve Coleman observes that "The Socialist Fulcrum is a lively and informative journal which is attractive to look at, and easy to read". Nevertheless, in 1984 it ceased publication.

In their letter to the Executive Committee in July, the three Toronto members, Sid and Marie Catt and Ray Rawlings, say that they are greatly concerned about the state of the Socialist Party of Canada. "Without new members we will eventually be defunct in Canada and this alarms us, as we know it does you." To them, it seemed dangerous to the socialist movement in Canada to have more members scattered across the country than in Victoria, where the Fulcrum was published and produced and where the Executive was situated. They argue that it is imperative that concentration in propagating socialism should, at that time, be made in Victoria. "We

must get new blood into the Party or eventually we will cease to exist." They claim that prior to the disbandment of the Toronto Local, "due to the dispute with Winnipeg, whose behaviour, to say the least, was undemocratic", they had some experience in winning workers over to the socialist case, adding, "perhaps our experience will help you in your efforts".

In the view of the Toronto Three, the Socialist Party of Canada should hold regular indoor meetings on topical subjects, and questions-of-the-day. These meetings, which the SPC had not held anywhere in the recent past, should be, firstly, held in a hired room and later in a small hall. The meetings should be advertised by fliers. Literature should always be sold at such meetings, and the names and addresses of all those who have purchased literature should be taken in order to follow up, and enable them to become subscribers. Indoor meetings, they say, are not like the hurly-burly of outdoor meetings. "Do not antagonize anyone who asks what may appear to us to be a stupid question, but deal with it logically and calmly; in that way you will encourage discussion." Indeed,

"Over a period of time, and if your meetings are lively, you should have some regular attenders. These you keep informed of any social functions, e.g. rambles, corn roasts., and/or parties. You have to practically live with these contacts to combat the deluge of capitalist propaganda to which they have been subject during a lifetime. A few social functions keeps the Party together, and will show that socialists also have a sense of humour, and are not living in not-so-splendid isolation. Eventually you will have new blood in the Party by these well-tried methods. Do not be discouraged by your first efforts. Regular meetings will bring results."

Arrange debates. "Debates help to keep the Party's name in front of the public and promote enthusiasm among the members", say the Toronto group. Steve Coleman, in his report, adds that halls should be booked for meetings in Toronto, Winnipeg, Vancouver and Victoria; radio and TV stations should be contacted well in advance, so that phone-ins and interviews can be sec-

ured. Phone-in programmes can be used to great effect, and only a few regular participants can make quite an impact, he contends. Contact all opponent organizations, and ask them if they wish to debate; contact universities, colleges, Trade unions and debating societies, offering to send a Socialist party speaker. It should also be possible to organize a few educational classes. "It must be emphasised that these proposals are only those which seem to be good ideas from a distance", writes Coleman. "At the end of the day, it is up to the SPC to decide what measures are most likely to stimulate the growth of socialist consciousness in Canada".

Victoria

AS suggested by the Toronto Three in their letter of July, 1982, the Socialist Party concentrated its efforts on the Victoria area, mainly because it had very little choice to do otherwise.

Members in Victoria concentrated largely on distributing leaflets during 1983 and 1984. At a large march and demonstration of unemployed workers, hundreds of SPC leaflets were distributed; and, shortly after, more than 2000 SPC anti-war leaflets were handed out at an "anti-nuke" demonstration. The Victoria members set up a literature stall in the Old Age Pensioners' Hall in front of a large banner, stating: "Socialism, World Without War, wages & Want - Socialist party of Canada". The 1983 British Columbia provincial election campaign was the shortest to date, being barely one month in duration. Fewer indoor meetings were held by the competing parties. Two quite small rallies were held in the Esquimalt Curling Rink. In previous elections, however, the rallies in Victoria had been held in the Memorial Arena, a much larger venue, with far larger crowds. In addition, candidates' meetings in schools and various clubs had smaller attendances than in the past. There was little interest in campaigning. The SPC was unable to field a candidate, but hurriedly prepared a leaflet, of which 1500 were distributed. The leaflet commenced by stating:

"It matters very little which of the two big parties wins the election and becomes the government; there will be no fundamental changes in our lives. Things will be basi-

cally the same as before. The lesser parties, ranging from extreme 'left' to the extreme 'right' have nothing better to offer in dealing with the serious problems of insecurity, poverty, conventional wars, and fears of nuclear annihilation, and other problems facing the 'ordinary' people in society."

in conclusion, the leaflet says that "To register their opposition to the cause of their problems in this election, since, sorry to say, there are no Socialist Party candidates, workers can use a write-in on their ballot: SOCIALISM".

There were no SPC candidates in the Federal Election the following year. As with the provincial elections, federal elections were changing. There were fewer party-sponsored meetings; but the number of all-candidates meetings, sponsored by various "protest" groups increased dramatically. There were 15 all-candidates meetings, and four meetings sponsored by individual political parties, in the Victoria area. The four all-party candidates meetings excluded "fringe" candidates. Most included the Green party, however. George Jenkins, reporting on SPC activities during the election, notes that had the Party fielded just one candidate in the Victoria riding, the socialist case could have been presented, at least briefly, at six or more of the all-candidates meetings, each with audiences of between 400 and 600 people. And the SPC would have been represented, again at least briefly, on one TV programme. Had the Socialist Party fielded two candidates, its representatives could have participated in two-thirds of all the meetings and radio and TV broadcasts. In the event, the SPC challenged the Libertarian and Green parties to debate; both accepted, and then changed their minds once the election campaign had started. Nevertheless, the SPC produced more than 2,500 leaflets. These were handed out at most of the meetings in Victoria, and a 1000 were distributed in Duncan and the Chemainus area, as well as some in Alberni. At one outdoor rally, addressed by a Liberal Party minister, one SPC member, Jim Lambie, put leaflets on the cars for about 20 minutes before he noticed that Liberal party workers were following him, and removing them! Jenkins concludes his report, saying: "There is a big percentage of the working class which is fed-up with the political spectrum parties, and it is regrettable that the SPC couldn't have made a bigger splash in Victoria".